
The **Catalyst**

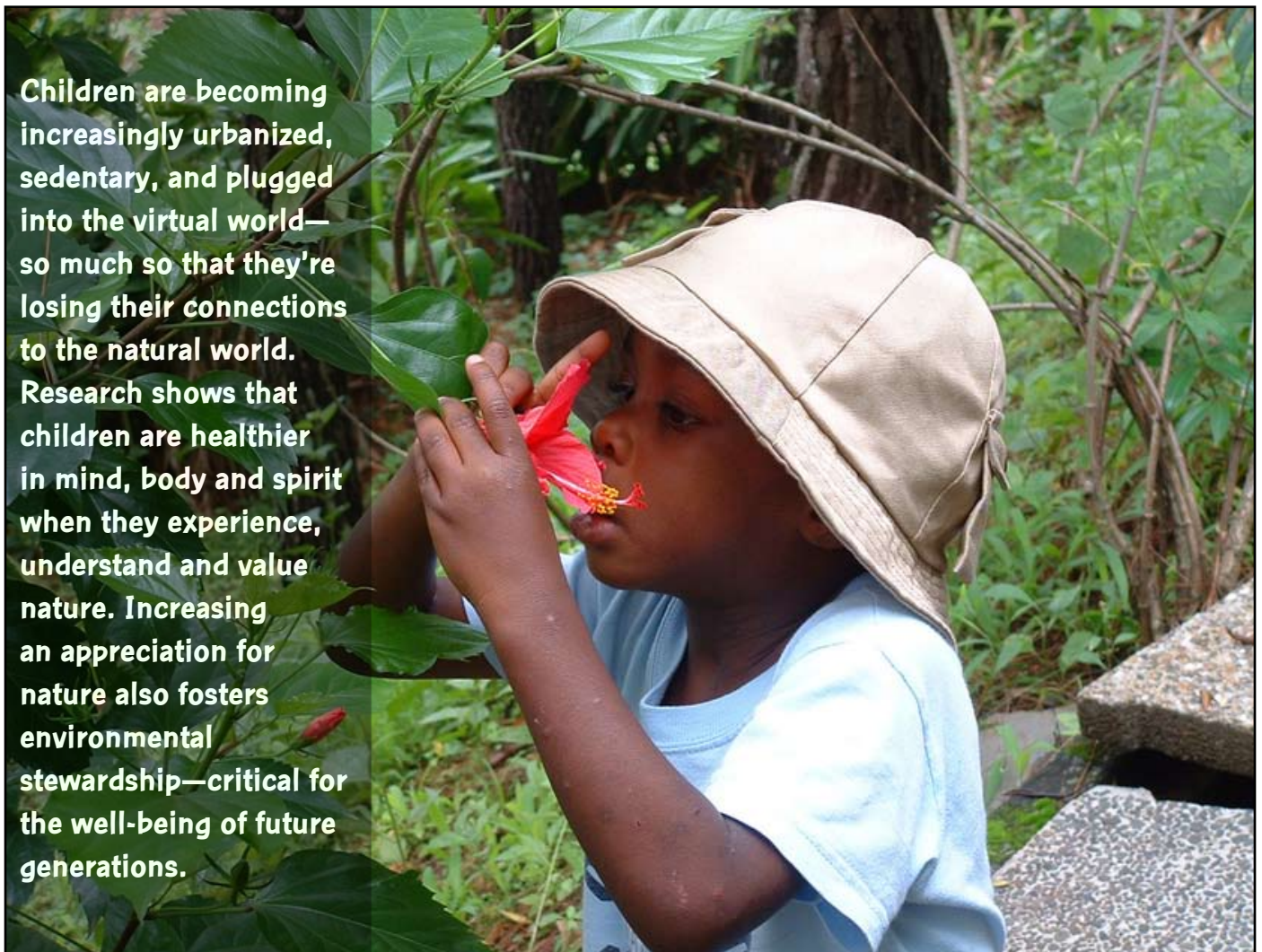
The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks
Summer 2008

Volume 10 No. 1



The Children in Nature Issue

Children are becoming increasingly urbanized, sedentary, and plugged into the virtual world—so much so that they're losing their connections to the natural world. Research shows that children are healthier in mind, body and spirit when they experience, understand and value nature. Increasing an appreciation for nature also fosters environmental stewardship—critical for the well-being of future generations.





The Catalyst is published periodically by California State Parks, ©2008. Opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of California State Parks. By submitting a manuscript to The Catalyst, the author assumes full responsibility for any copyright infringement. Please contact the editor for permission to reprint any item appearing in The Catalyst.

ISSN 1089-9286

For address changes or additional subscriptions, please call or e-mail Corrine Nelson at cnelson@parks.ca.gov or (916) 654-2249

Editors:

Nina Gordon
Senior Policy Coordinator
Interpretation and Education

Monique Osborne
Graduate Assistant

Publisher: Donna Pozzi
Interpretation & Education
(916) 653-4643
DPOZZ@parks.ca.gov

Copy editor: John Werminski
Interpretation & Education
(916) 653-8959
JWERM@parks.ca.gov

Contributor's Guidelines

The Catalyst welcomes your original articles up to two pages in length. We prefer unpublished material, but will occasionally reprint items published elsewhere. Be sure to include information about the publication so we can get permission to use the material. You may submit an article at any time. Please include a photo whenever possible.

We really appreciate items submitted on disk or by e-mail. We can read most DOS/Windows file formats. Please send photos as separate files, not inserted into your document. You may also submit original photos or other illustrations to The Catalyst. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly. We reserve the right to edit all material. Items are selected for publication solely at the discretion of the editor and publisher. We appreciate your suggestions.

From
WE E PALS
creator
Morrie Turner



Guest Editors Wanted

Are you looking for an opportunity to work with other writers on engaging interpretive topics? Would you like to develop and challenge your creative and technical skills? Consider becoming a Guest Editor for an upcoming issue of The Catalyst. Among topics we're planning for future issues are:

**Interpreting Climate Change
Interpretation and Technology
Interpretive Planning**

Please contact Donna Pozzi with your ideas: DPOZZ@parks.ca.gov

From the Editor

**Nina Gordon,
Senior Policy Coordinator
Interpretation and Education**

This edition of *The Catalyst* is about joy and discovery and our future. It is about a child's anticipation while turning over a log and the resultant squeal of delight upon discovering a centipede running along on a wave of moving legs. It is about hearing the little croak of a frog and seeing the startled green lump come to life and leap into a pond. It is experiencing the sense of accomplishment in using hands, limbs and feet to find a route to those upper tree branches and, once there, discovering a perfect perch with bird friends from which to spy on the hapless grownups below. It is spending an afternoon skipping rocks across a creek, becoming thoroughly soaked in the process of searching for perfect projectiles. It is about the sense of reward after climbing a hill, the joy of rolling back down through sage, and forever recalling its lingering scent.

OHV Division Chief Phil Jenkins still remembers the smell of sage many decades later. Phil relayed his story at a Director's off-site in 2006, during which we looked back on our childhood for those pivotal memories. The exercise and subsequent series of discussions concluded with the realization that we must ensure that the next generation experiences what we shared—both for their health and for the health of the State Park System. We are in the throes of a very

disturbing period. This is the first time that an entire generation is growing up disconnected from nature. What a sobering thought. This alienation from nature has many causes, including lack of unstructured time to play, parents' perceptions of natural and human-caused imminent dangers, and a plethora of seductive technological devices. We are also competing with children's expectations of continuous heightened stimulation and instant results, a tempo not usually mirrored in nature.

We have the advantage—nothing can replace the experience of touching, smelling and feeling the textures of nature and of getting wet and dirty. The solution can be the simple act of introducing children to the natural world, and helping them over that threshold until their innate curiosity takes hold. The recent joint agency "BioBlitz" was a scene of very excited kids actively seeking and studying

the fauna of an area and contributing to a larger understanding of the ecosystem. Professor Louise Chawla of Colorado State University completed a study to find out the motivation of environmental leaders to achieve their roles. The leaders all had two elements in common: they had opportunities to play in nature, and they each had mentors who took them to the outdoors.

I recently had the privilege of discussing these issues with Richard Louv. We talked about the "moral right" of a child to have these experiences in nature. It is our moral obligation as state park employees to provide these experiences. No matter what position or job we have in the Department, we can all contribute.

Director Coleman feels strongly about this crisis; thus was formed the California State Parks Children in Nature Campaign, part of a growing national and international movement. The Campaign brings together all the terrific activities, events, programs and other efforts that currently exist in the Department. The primary goal of the Campaign is to coordinate and promote all State Park programs that connect children to nature and provide resources to raise awareness. Your expertise and skill will ensure the Campaign's long-range continued success.

We can all contribute to the solution. Although we are all very busy and have competing obligations. But throughout the



Erin Cahill, daughter of Brian Cahill, State Park Interpreter III

From the Editor, Continued

Department, employees from all areas are creatively raising awareness and promoting opportunities to connect children with nature. Some examples are:

- Dave Gould, Marin District Superintendent, is arranging for a discussion of the State Park Campaign in one of the ongoing collaborative meetings with local law enforcement and education agencies;

- Jonas Ukeroth, from the Worker's Compensation and Safety Unit, has given us an international and personal perspective of a long-standing children's program in Sweden (see article);

- Danita Rodriguez, Marin Sector Superintendent, has incorporated the Children in Nature Campaign in her role (see article);



Kaitlyn, geocaching daughter of Barry Trute, Associate Park and Recreation Specialist



Breanna and Kimberly, daughters of Michael DeBoer, Superintendent, Community Involvement

- Interpreters Wes Chapin of Channel Coast and Ellen Absher of Inland Empire each developed very creative ways of incorporating the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights in district staff trainings (see articles);

- Diablo Vista's Karen Barrett inspired the local Boys and Girls Club serving a low-income Hispanic neighborhood to have a sleepover, and their club leader is promoting the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights to the Regional Council;

- Heidi Doyle, ranger from the Sierra District, illustrates how a commemorative event at Ehrman Mansion can show that children have had historic ties to the land (see story);

- Jenny Donovan, North Coast Redwoods District Supervising Ranger, strengthened ties to the local community by challenging school children to complete the activities in the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Close your eyes and go back to that moment in your childhood where you first experienced the smells, textures and sounds of the outdoors. Keep that memory in mind as you read this issue; the Campaign strives to ensure that every child grows up to have similar memories of joy, discovery, and adventure. Those memories will help shape every child's future and his/her connection to the land. It will enable children to be better stewards of our state parks and public lands. Now, find a child and step outside.

What's Up?



Interpreters' Resources

Below is a list of websites where you can find information regarding the Children in Nature movement, its history, academic research, program development and nature activities. This list is compiled from the Children in Nature website's "Research and Resources" page. For a full listing of resources, please visit www.parks.ca.gov/cinc.

California Children in Nature Campaign Issue Paper

Researching the Child-Nature Connection for the California Department of Parks and Recreation. www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=25024

Get Outdoors USA

Public-private partnership. This site provides access to online nature exploration and resources for parents to use when taking their children outside. <http://www.getoutdoorsusa.org>

The Children's Nature Institute

A nonprofit organization that provides membership information and a schedule of environmental education programs for children (birth to eight years old), parents and teachers in Los Angeles County. <http://www.childrensnatureinstitute.org>.

National Wildlife Federation, Green Hour

Nonprofit organization that provides information about programs, recommends activities for children, and fosters communication among members through a blog, community corner and members' space. <http://www.greenhour.org/content/activity>

The Importance of Being Playful- Publication (Educational Leadership)

Addresses the benefits of play, including higher levels of academic achievement, social skills and classroom behavior, and the corresponding drawbacks when play is not present. http://pdoline.ascd.org/pd_online/substitute/el200304_bodrova.html

The Web Ranger Challenge

Hosted by a federal agency. An online interactive game that allows children to virtually explore and discover the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. www.nps.gov/archove/indu/education/wrc/game.htm

Children & Nature Network (C&NN)

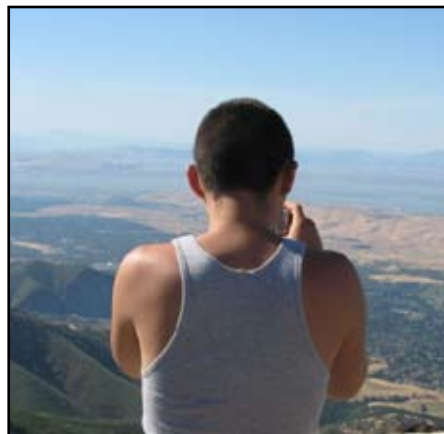
A nonprofit organization chaired by Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*. Offers access to a network of educators, researchers, and other interested parties, the latest news and research on this topic, and tips for taking action. www.cnaturenet.org

Sharing Nature Foundation

Educational organization that provides information on programs for adult leaders, books and resources. "Flow Learning" and Sharing Nature worldwide activities. www.sharingnature.com.

Hooked on Nature

Provides information, activities for children, a blog and links to other movements and research. <http://www.hookedonnature.org/connectingnature.html>



Looking out over Mt. Diablo

Dear Master Interpreter

Dear Master Interpreter,

I think this "Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights" is great, but why do kids need to "Catch a Fish"? Is killing an animal really the best way to instill an appreciation for nature?

Friend of Fish



Dear Fishy Friend,

You can bet there was a lot of discussion on what should be included in this Bill of Rights. We certainly don't have any problem with releasing that fish after kids catch it; we really encourage that. But the bottom line is that angling is a hugely popular outdoor recreational activity. According to a recent Harris Poll, 11% of adults mention fishing as one of their favorite leisure activities. Harris identified it as the fifth most popular leisure activity in the country, ranking just below movie-watching and just ABOVE computer-related activities. At last count, there were 29.9 million anglers in the US. The Wildlife Service estimated that fishing was a \$40.6 billion industry in 2006.

So go ahead and include a conservation message when you mention fishing. But keep in mind that President Herbert Hoover said the pursuit of happiness in the Declaration of Independence "obviously includes the pursuit of fish."

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

We put a lot of effort into our school programs down here. Lately we have been getting requests from

kindergarten and even preschool classes. But those kids are just too young to understand the material we need to cover. Do you have any tips for teaching younger kids?

Kid Wrangler

Dear Wrangler,

Yes, teach less and share more. Don't just try to dumb-down your regular program. Start with objectives tailored precisely to this audience. They don't need to learn to identify 5 species that live in your park. Remember that crucial attitudes about nature are developing in kids at a very early age. Simply having a positive, fun experience outdoors in a state park may be the only objective you need. Adjust your expectations and have a good time with them. You'll do great.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

OK, I get it. Today's kids are kept busy with soccer practice, music lessons and tutoring while there is suddenly this big push for more unstructured outdoor play. But my question is why is this OUR problem? The kids are only here briefly and it is going to be their parents that can change this.

Not My Kid

Dear Not Mine,

OK, I get it too. Maybe you don't have kids. But when you put on that uniform, you are looked upon as a recreation professional; that's what makes it your job. Parents are only in your park briefly, so help them out. Let them know where to find the cool rocks that kids love to climb on. Where can kids safely explore? What part of the park would you show your eight-year-old nephews? We may not be able to make unstructured play happen, but we can certainly facilitate

it and make it easier for parents to find these opportunities in your park.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

A lot of kids (and their moms) who visit my park are worried about all kinds of things that might be out there. They worry about West Nile virus, Lyme disease, lions, snakes, and venomous insects—the list goes on and on. They have a hard time enjoying the outdoors with all this on their minds. How can I help them understand that this park REALLY is a safe place?

Risk Ranger

Dear RR,

Well, each of those is a very real risk. As you know, with some common sense preventative measures, none of those is really a big deal. People usually tend to overestimate the danger of rare events, yet they underestimate danger of more common events like driving a car. People tend to assume that if they can control a situation, they are safer. The high number of traffic accident fatalities shows that this is an erroneous assumption.

People are more worried by dramatic but infrequent events than by "boring" risks like slipping on a wet floor. But it is that wet floor or the bite from a friendly dog that is most likely to get them. So go ahead and encourage them to use insect repellent, sunscreen, seatbelts and personal flotation devices while they enjoy your park. You don't have to minimize the risks; just put them in perspective. You might also try to personalize it — tell them what you do to protect yourself and how safe you feel in the park.

MI

The Children and Nature Movement

By Nicole Migliarese
Park Interpretive Specialist
Interpretation and Education

If 2007 is remembered for anything, it can be recalled as the year that nature had her say—at least as far as childhood goes. The past 15 or so months have found people from all walks of life and various fields of work rallying around the "children and nature" movement with a common cause of reconnecting children with the natural world around them.

Along with the "go green" trend soaring in popularity, the "No Child Left Inside" movement—as it is often referred to—has found its way into the spotlight of pop culture and has been covered by most of the mainstream media outlets in television, print and on the Internet. A Google search of the phrase brings up over 200,000 links alone.

Based on the premise forwarded by author Richard Louv (*Last Child in the Woods*) that today's children are suffering from a nature deficit, leaders in the children and nature movement have raised public awareness of the benefits for children that come from time spent outdoors—either in structured programs like Scouts or simply exploring and playing in the neighborhood park. And the evidence for these claims keeps growing. New studies document that time spent in the natural world

brings physical, psychological and social benefits for both the young and the young at heart.

Well-known pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton spoke recently about the benefits of time spent outdoors, noting that outdoor opportunities allow children to "find themselves, find out what they're like as people, find what works and what doesn't work." These lessons might be learned best by having the time to explore, be creatively engaged with friends in play, and to let the mysteries of nature capture their curiosities—unique characteristics of outdoor play that don't seem to be replicated when children spend their time "plugged in" to video games, TV viewing or solitary indoor pastimes.

Leaping at the opportunity to lead the initiative for California, CSP got down to work in determining how our agency could best accomplish the goal of reconnecting kids to nature. The result? The **California Children in Nature – A Campaign for Action**, a statewide initiative of California State Parks.

Begun around the central premise to make the child/nature connection issue accessible to all segments of California society, the Campaign will coordinate and promote State Parks programs that connect children with nature, provide resources to raise awareness and understanding of the critical need for this effort, work with partners to facilitate regional collaborations, and work directly with communities to bolster capacity and promote sustainability of efforts.

The Campaign's vision statement captures CSP's goal: "All California children will be inspired to actively and creatively engage with and appreciate the natural environment." This goal comes to life in the "California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights," one of the Campaign's largest initiatives.

You can find out more about the Campaign and the Outdoor Bill of Rights at www.parks.ca.gov/cinc including information on the research studies documenting the benefits of connecting children with nature, a list of Internet resources for families, funders, service providers and the like, with activities that show just how easy it is to help ensure that no child is left inside.



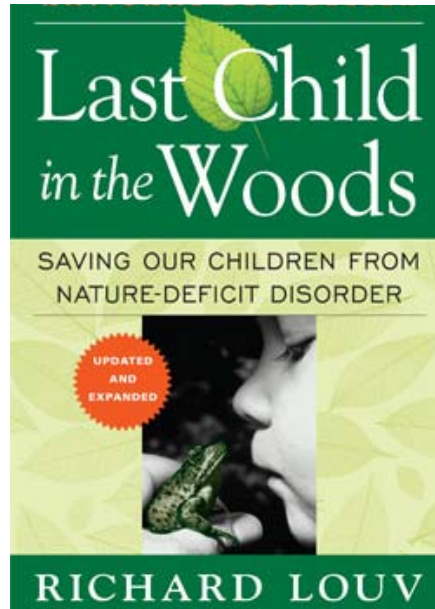
Book Review

Last Child In the Woods by Richard Louv

**By Brian Barton
Supervising State Park Ranger
Sierra District/Lake Tahoe**

I like to read, usually in the evening before I go to sleep. I mostly read meaningless fiction to turn my brain off for the night. Recently, I read a more substantial book by Richard Louv, titled *Last Child in the Woods*. This is a must-read book for all parents and any lover of nature. This is a serious, thought-provoking book where Louv researches what he calls "Nature Deficit Disorder."

Louv interviews scientists, parents, children, teachers, child-development leaders and environmentalists, documenting an increasing disconnect between children and nature. He contends that after thousands of years of playing and working primarily outdoors, the last few generations have completely lost most of their interactions with nature. "I like to play indoors better—because that's where all the electrical outlets are," one fourth-grader interviewed said. While that sounds sad, not only television, computers and video games are causing children to spend more time inside. It's also their parents' fear of strangers, fear of media-hyped stories about Lyme disease and West Nile virus and more rigorous school, work and structured schedules.



Governments, neighborhood associations and the like also keep placing more regulatory constraints on many wild spaces, sometimes making nature play (like building a fort, picking flowers or digging for insects) a crime. As our children's connections with nature are diminished, there are many documented negative impacts on children's psychological development.

Recent research also shows that a connection with nature may help treat medical conditions like Attention Deficit Disorder, depression, and childhood obesity. Other research has shown that outdoor-based education helps improve standardized test scores as it improves decision-making and

critical-thinking skills in students. Experiences in nature help stimulate a child's creativity later in life.

Knowing this, the problem becomes apparent. "If education and other forces, intentionally or unintentionally, continue to push the young away from a direct experience in nature, the cost to science itself will be high," Louv writes. "Most scientists today began their careers as children, chasing bugs and snakes, collecting spiders, and feeling awe in the presence of nature." Since such untidy activities are fast disappearing, how then will our future scientists learn about nature?"

This fear became reality recently during a conversation I had with a professor of wildlife at the University of California at Berkeley. He told me that many of the students entering the wildlife field today are doing so because of what they saw on "Animal Planet." When they experience their first field trip into the forest, they feel overwhelmed and fearful once they get out of sight of the bus.

I feel very blessed to have grown up in a rural environment, working on a ranch, climbing trees, poking at gopher mounds with sticks and running through the pastures and woods.

Book Review, Continued

I'm saddened to think that children today may not develop the same love for nature that I have or have the experiences that I had as a youth; these experiences may not be available for most children, even my own

Friends of mine (they're new parents) who read this book understood the need for their children to experience nature, but they also told me they just didn't see how it could be done. Their excuses for not taking their

children out included working full time, living in a large city without "nature" nearby, and safety concerns about letting children go out alone. I tried to explain to them that Louv's definition of "nature" that children can benefit from is not difficult. It's not daily exposure to Lassen Volcanic National Park or the Marble Mountains Wilderness Area. For children, it's more like a group of trees at a local park, a greenbelt or storm retention pond, or even a weed-covered vacant lot. "... the rivulet of a seasonal creek, even the ditch between a front yard and the road—all

of these places are entire universes to a young child," Louv writes.

I am very hopeful that we as parents, teachers, and mentors can recognize the implications of "Nature Deficit Disorder" and meet the challenge head-on. Living in Shasta County, you have even more opportunities than most Californians. Recognize that blessing, make opportunities for your children to be in nature, and they will create their own relationships with it.

We all will be better for it.

Recipe for a Fun Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights Training

By Ellen Absher, State Park Interpreter II, Lake Perris State Recreational Area

Ingredients:

1 Enthusiastic Planning Committee

Guide books, backpacks, boots, puppets, paddles, costumes, and other items that represent the natural, cultural and historic elements of your district's parks.



Directions:

1. Disperse items across ten tables, along with one of each right from the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights written on a 3 x 5 card.
2. When your staff arrives, let them know that they should choose any and as many of the items to represent their "right."
3. Later in the day, they will then demonstrate each "right" to the rest of the staff through singing a song, doing a dance, acting out a skit or reciting poetry.

The Results: All of your staff will learn the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights and the different kinds of activities available throughout your district parks, and you can almost guarantee lots of fun and laughter along the way.

For more information on this training event or some of the other fun recipes Ellen and her staff are cooking up, please contact her at: (951)940-5656 Museum Office, (951)657-0676 Sector Office or EAbsher@parks.ca.gov

Education and the Environment Initiative: No Child Left Inside

**By Wendy Harrison, Interpreter I
Calaveras Big Trees State Park and
Indian Grinding Rock
State Historic Park**

As part of our efforts in parks to increase children's connection to nature, you may be interested to learn about a new initiative taking place in California's schools. Called the Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI), this landmark legislation provides a significant opportunity to increase environmental literacy by making learning of environmental principles and concepts an integral part of the K-12 curriculum.

Those of us who work with teachers and students know that the current climate in schools—due to the restrictions set by “No Child Left Behind” state testing requirements and academic content standards—leaves little room for environmental education. Environmental education is considered supplemental, which makes it difficult for many teachers to justify outdoor experiences and field trips.

EEI differs because it focuses on achieving mastery of California's academic content standards while using the environment as a context for learning. Environmental Principles and Concepts (EP&C) have been developed that are aligned to academic content standards, and will even be included in textbooks. It has

been approved by the State Board of Education, giving it great credibility among educators. We can encourage use of parks by schools by aligning our programs with the EP&C's.

EEI is an important piece of the emerging trend to support our children's health, happiness and learning by providing experiences that help them form a deep connection to the natural world.

Since our children will inherit some serious environmental problems as adults in a few short years, it is vital that they have first-hand knowledge of natural systems in order to come up with informed solutions.

For more information, you can visit the EEI website at www.calepa.ca.gov/education/eei.



Mendocino Headlands State Park — school field trip. EEI is an important piece of the emerging trend to support our children's health, happiness and learning by providing experiences that help them form a deep connection to the natural world.

FamCamp

Creating Quality Time for Families®

By Terry Gerson

**Park and Recreation Specialist
Office of Community Involvement**

FamCamp® is a program of the California State Parks Foundation and California State Parks that began in 1994. It is a statewide program that introduces camping to underserved areas of our communities.

The purpose of the program is to introduce camping to families who would otherwise not have the opportunity for an overnight outdoor recreational experience. This helps strengthen family bonds through a new form of recreation that promotes a safe, affordable activity involving all members of the family. FamCamp encourages the use of state parks by community-based organizations as it helps them meet the goals for their communities.

FamCamp works by providing a trailer full of camping equipment and a campsite reserved at a state park. The campground is usually located relatively close to an urban area and is available year round. Fifteen of these FamCamp trailers are located throughout California; each one accommodates up to 36 campers.



The trailer contains tents, sleeping bags, pads, stoves, lanterns, propane, pots and pans, dishes, silverware and other essential items for camping.

Participating groups need only bring food, personal gear, and a willingness to try out something different. The groups are responsible for the care of the equipment, proper storage after use, and washing the sleeping bag liners.

Recreation is the strongest contributing factor for creating strong and supportive families, which in turn nurture children and youth.

Leisure opportunities that allow for togetherness and sharing promote close, healthy family relationships. Strong family bonds are essential to mental and social health. Families and groups who recreate together tend to be closer and more cohesive; they also improve their chances of staying together.

For more information:

In Northern California: Dolores Mejia,
dmejia@parks.ca.gov, 916.653.5454

In Southern California: Russ Kimura,
rkimu@parks.ca.gov 818.905.0931

Sugar Pine Point SP Living History Day: Where History, Nature and Play Meet

**By Ranger Heidi Doyle
Lake Tahoe Sector
Sierra District**

Is it possible to get kids involved with learning history in a format that encourages free play and expression in a natural environment? Is there a program that encourages California's children to participate in outdoor recreation activities and discover their heritage in the same activity? Absolutely! Where is this exciting program and how did you find time to develop it? The answer is found in two phrases: Living History Day and Eagle Scout Project!!

Living History Day, the annual open house held in the historic zone of Ed Z'Berg-Sugar Pine Point State Park on the last Saturday in July, is a newly resurrected special event that involves over 100 volunteers staging venues throughout the park. In 2007 over 1800 visitors enjoyed what is fast becoming one of the premier events on Lake Tahoe's west shore!

Living History Day emphasizes a family atmosphere with a variety of events ranging from costumed first-person interpretation and demonstrations to historic boat and car displays, Native American elders sharing stories, guided nature hikes, live period music for dancing, and accomplished artists demonstrating



The fun starts at the front yard of the historic Children's House, where the kids can imagine staying if their family had been invited guests to the Ehrman estate in the 1930's.
All photographs by Emilie Corcoran

their crafts. However, my favorite component is the Children's Activity Zone, where you will find kids learning, exploring, laughing and playing outside immersed in the wonders of the high Sierra—just like generations of kids before them!

The Children's Activity Zone was developed by a local teen looking for an Eagle Scout Project at the same time that I was putting together the concept for a kid's component for the event. I knew that I wanted a special place for kids to learn about our local history while having fun. After I determined that the Eagle Scout candidate had the skills and interest to carry out the project, I let him loose to research and brainstorm activities that met three criteria: 1) the RAPPORT standards

for interpretation, 2) the teaching standards and guidelines utilized in the California State Park Junior Ranger program and 3) all activities must have a major emphasis on FUN!

In addition, it was important the scout develop a project manual, which clearly outlines the activity stations and planning tools needed for future program chairs to duplicate the events in future years. Over the course of several months, the Kids' Activity Zone was developed and remains a major component of this popular annual event.

The fun starts at the site venue: the front yard of the historic Children's House, where the kids can imagine

Living History, Continued

staying if their family had been invited guests to the estate in the 1930s. Upon entering the Children's Activity Zone (yes, even entering is special) each child checks in and is given a passport which is used to guide them to the various stations.

The passports are stamped at each completed activity and each child is given a special memento to take home upon completing all the stations: a Litter Getter bag to store their new mementoes and to help us keep the park clean! We encourage participants of Junior Ranger age (7-12) to participate without their parents. However, in the spirit of full participation, all ages are welcome.

The Children's Activity Zone stations include:

Story Telling We share stories and read books popular with kids in the 1930s. We emphasize the themes of exploration and adventure.

"Who am I?" Dress-up Station Kids pick clothes from a large basket to dress up, play and imagine life before electronics. Participants are given a "character card" and are encouraged to interact with each other as their new persona. We promote playing "hide and seek" among the trees and free play.

Learn Croquet We have a croquet course set up and teach participants a popular game of long ago. We give them the game rules, but let them make it up as they chase the wooden balls on the grassy knoll.

Become an Artist Using a pen and ink drawing of the Pine Lodge as a starting point, the kids complete the artwork using various medium. The results are refrigerator worthy!

Do you have what it takes to be a Mountain Man? Kids meet Mountain Man Mike and discover what being a kid in the 1880s might have been like, including the fact that jumping in the lake counted as taking a bath. Participants learn about different trees and make bark rubbings to create their own tree-identification guides.

The Children's Activity Zone has proven to be one of the most popular events of Living History

Day. Children learn to celebrate their California heritage and explore nature in a safe environment (two of the rights from the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights).

A visitor will uncover smiling faces filled with a sense of accomplishment and the excitement of having fun. Our community of visitors loves that the park has an event for the entire family that allows kids to explore and learn in a creative outdoor environment. Won't you join us on the last Saturday of July?

For more information: www.laketahoelivinghistory.com. Ranger Doyle may be reached at 530-525-9528 or hdoyle@parks.ca.gov.



Kids pick clothes from a large basket to dress up, play and imagine life before electronics.

California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights



By Nina Gordon
Senior Policy Coordinator
Interpretation and Education

With recent concerns about youth detachment from the natural world and outdoor activities, lack of physical exercise and increased health risks, the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism created the [California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights](#) (COBR). The ten activities are:

Discover California's Past
Splash in the Water
Play in a Safe Place
Camp Under the Stars
Explore Nature
Learn to Swim
Play on a Team
Follow a Trail
Catch a Fish
Celebrate Their Heritage

The COBR is a life list of ten fun activities that every child should have

a chance to experience between the ages of 4 and 14. The activities are designed to be simple and achievable, with the goal of promoting outdoor recreation and a connection to nature and heritage.

The COBR appeals to kids, parents and organizations. Kids enjoy it as the fun activities provide a challenge with potential rewards. Parents are very supportive because the COBR gives them both structure and reminder to get their kids outside and active, as it encourages family participation. The COBR also serves as a catalyst to promote collaborations among organizations and agencies. For example, the YMCA can offer swim lessons, local historical societies can be involved in cultural and heritage projects, and angler groups can offer fishing opportunities. State Parks employees have used the COBR in very creative ways, as illustrated in this newsletter. The California Park and Hospitality Association developed a creative program based on the COBR entitled "Fit Kids" (www.fitkids.us) that also promotes healthy eating. The COBR is the framework for a recently launched effort in the Los Angeles basin to build a collaboration and provide a directory of services.

Official Endorsements and Promotions
 Governor Schwarzenegger endorsed the COBR in a proclamation on July 7, 2007. In his proclamation, he stated spending time in the great outdoors can be a wonderful

experience for people of all ages, and this is especially true for our youth. Participating in outdoor activities is not only an enjoyable way for kids to get the exercise they need, it also helps them develop a greater appreciation for our magnificent environment. The California Park and Recreation Commission also endorsed the COBR in a resolution a month later, and the California State Park Rangers Association voted to support the initiative at their 2007 conference. Other agencies and organizations that have endorsed the COBR include the California Park and Recreation Society (with over 100 member agencies), the California Council of YMCAs, and the Pacific Stewardship Council—and the list is growing.



Explore Nature—Los Angeles SHP

Bill of Rights, Continued

The COBR is gaining statewide and national recognition and requests for presentations have come from the Rocky Mountains State Parks conference, the National Trails Conference, the National Association of Recreation and Resource Planners and the upcoming 2008 National Park and Recreation Association conference.

The California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism

The California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism,

(California Roundtable) founded in 1998, consists of public, private, nonprofit and academic institutions, and has proven to be a very successful forum for exchanging ideas and addressing issues through initiatives and symposia.

A California Roundtable Symposium held in December 2007, "Get Healthier Outdoors," identified common interests between health professionals and park and recreation professionals, setting the stage for further action. California State Parks has chaired the California Roundtable since its inception;

DPR's Nina Gordon serves as the current chair.

Resources and More Information

The California State Parks website (Children in Nature link) www.parks.ca.gov/cinc contains resources on the COBR including flyers in English and Spanish, sample certificates and a Powerpoint presentation.

A limited supply of magnets and bookmarks are currently available, and the Interpretation/Education Division will be providing more bookmarks. A banner is available for loan for special events. To find out more about the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism and the COBR, including the Governor's proclamation and information on past symposia, see the website www.calroundtable.org



Celebrate Heritage—Col. Allenswoth SHP Blacksmith Shop

The Children in Nature Campaign is constantly on the lookout for high-resolution pictures of children and their families enjoying our state parks. We would appreciate any and all pictures (with signed releases if children can be recognized). We also are on the lookout for your park's events and activities that can be added to the CINC calendar. Please forward information and pictures to cincinformation@parks.ca.gov or Nina Gordon, NGORDON@parks.ca.gov



Follow a Trail—Mt. Diablo OYC

Can You Guess the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights?

By Wes Chapin

District Interpretive Specialist
Channel Coast District

If you're looking for a simple way to introduce the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights or "COBR" to your employees that is not only fun but also increases their familiarity with the COBR dramatically, there's nothing like playing a game! We did just that at our second annual All-District Interpreters' Workshop. Here's all it took:

Preparation:

We printed each of the COBRs on a separate piece of paper. We used ledger size, so everyone attending the workshop could see them.

We added an iconic image to each right, something that visually communicated the essence of that right. This was a snap because each right suggests an obvious image, and clip art is readily available on the web. We printed the pages with a color printer, making them as colorful as possible to maximize interest.

Prior to the start of our workshop, we taped each page up with its face to the front wall of the room where the training would take place. We taped up a second sheet of paper to each so that the wording wasn't

visible through the paper (not that anyone would have cheated!).

Playing the game:

We introduced the game at the beginning of the workshop, right after the opening remarks, because one workshop objectives was to develop a high level of interest among participants at the outset—a game was a great way to do that. We explained that the objective of the game was to correctly identify as many of the rights on the COBR as possible. Because our employees' level of familiarity with the COBR was still relatively low, we felt the game would be challenging.

We had already spent a couple of minutes getting everyone divided into three smaller groups, so it was easy to increase interest in the game by introducing a little competition. We announced that we would be awarding a prize at the end of the workshop to the team that came up with the most correct rights. We had a large score card at the front of the room so that the teams could see how they were faring against their competition.

There are a couple of options for playing the game. One is to play it straight through in a single block of time. We chose a different approach.

If you've ever conducted an all-day training session, you know that getting people to come back from breaks in a timely manner can be a challenge. So we signaled the end of each break by playing another "round" of "Guess the COBR!"

Using a loud voice to announce the resumption of competition helped get everyone's attention, and the threat of losing ground in the rankings worked to get people to return to their seats quickly. It's amazing how competitive interpreters are, and we hadn't even described what the prize was going to be!

At the end of the day, we tallied up the results of the game and presented prizes to the winning team. We awarded packets of corn seeds because another of our Workshop themes highlighted the department's "Cool Parks" initiative. We wanted to enable the winners to grow their own bio-fuel—or use the harvest for food (their choice). We also presented all of our interpreters with personal laminated bookmarks listing the COBR (courtesy of Nina Gordon's office).

Finally, with the complete COBR displayed for all to see, we asked participants to look them over to see how many rights kids can accomplish

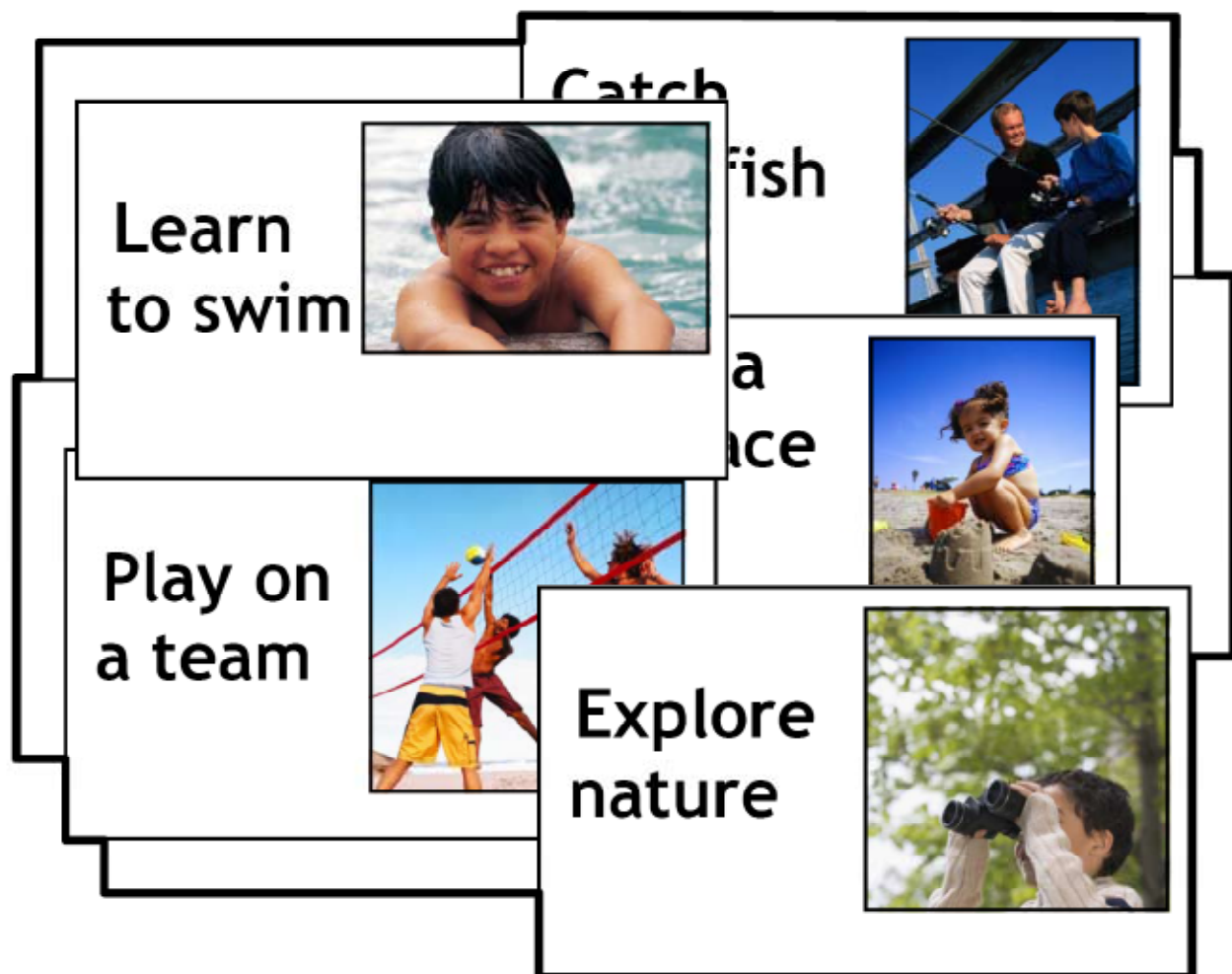
Guess the COBR, Continued

in California State Parks. You could almost see the compact fluorescent lamps turn on above their heads when they realized that ALL of the COBR can be achieved in California State Parks!

It was a dramatic conclusion to the game. That's about it. Not rocket

science, but we had a surprising amount of fun. We achieved two objectives with the game: it helped us keep the workshop agenda on track without a lot of after-break brow-beating and, more importantly, it increased our interpreters' familiarity with the COBR dramatically.

One note of caution: if you use the all-day version of the game, don't be surprised if you notice a marked improvement in the accuracy of the guesses as the day goes on. It's amazing how resourceful interpreters can be, especially if they have cell phones with internet access!



Easy-to-make graphics like these, (designed by author) used in a simple game of "Guess the COBR!" helped to increase employee interest in and retention of these important children's rights at a recent Interpreters Workshop at the Channel Coast District.

A Superintendent's Perspective

Danita Rodriguez

**State Park Superintendent III
Marin Sector**

As the field representative of the California State Parks Children in Nature Campaign Committee, I try to give the Committee a perspective from the field. When I was a field and supervising ranger, one of my passions and interests was kids, especially those that were/are non-traditional park users. For example, I was involved in California Police Activities League for many years. So it seemed like a natural fit for me to become involved with the Children in Nature Campaign (CINC). When I became sector superintendent, I was no longer able to be as hands-on as I would have liked; however, I was in the position to supply both leadership and support to field staff and community organizations.

So how do Sector Superintendents spread the mission and goals of the CINC around their district? Well, Sector Superintendents go to a lot of meetings, so it seemed logical to add a few more meetings with program directors from various organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club or the YMCA. The initial meetings with these community organizations were to let them know that state parks are nearby, we have places to visit, and we have staff who are more than happy to present programs to their kids in town or at one of our

state parks. I also introduced the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBR) to them. I encouraged them to use the COBR as a fun checklist, ultimately reaching the goal of attaining all ten "rights." In fact, the Lompoc YMCA decided to highlight one of the ten "rights" each week during their summer camp program, so that by the end of the program, the kids would be able to check off each one.

State parks are great places to check off the various activities. Even if they couldn't come to a state park, I encouraged them to challenge themselves by checking off the list during visits to their local parks. Once I've made the initial contact, I rely on the field supervisors to continue the outreach effort with the different community groups. Recently a State Park Interpreter and I went to a Boys and Girls Club and gave a presentation, including a lesson on how to set up a tent.

I can attest that superintendents are busy and we have a number of priorities in and around our parks. But if the next generations don't make a connection with the natural world, including state parks, we will become irrelevant. I recognize that it takes time but I believe it is important for field staff to be involved. It is also important that, as the sector superintendent, I am involved, which

means meeting with community organizations and their leadership and supporting the staff as they spread the mission and goals of the Children in Nature Campaign and State Parks.

I recently transferred to the Marin District, in the heart of one of the largest environmental education areas in California. With so many programs, open space agencies and departments, I get involved by educating my staff on the Children in Nature Campaign, and what we can do to combat nature-deficit disorder. I have also been encouraging my staff to develop at least two new and innovative kids' programs in each of the Marin Sector's parks this year. Additionally, I found a school that could benefit by an "Adopt-A-School" program and am working with staff to nurture that relationship and implement programs this academic year.

There are many important issues out there; but kids, who will one day be adults making important decisions about our environment seems pretty important to me. It's not just child's play. This is a real concern, and who else is in a better position to make change than California State Parks?

Please contact Danita Rodriguez if you want to find out more information drodriguez@parks.ca.gov

Comic Relief

Morrie Turner is the creator of the first truly integrated comic strip, *Wee Pals*, started in 1965 and now reaching over 25 million readers. Morrie has always been a strong advocate for kids and has continued to work with children in small cartooning programs in the inner city. He is a guest lecturer at numerous California schools and universities. Morrie has received numerous awards and founded the African American Museum in Oakland. Nina Gordon is honored to be a friend of Morrie's; she talked to him about the State Parks Children in Nature initiative. After reminiscing about the frogs and other discoveries of nature he found in his childhood Oakland neighborhood, Morrie offered to create a series of cartoons for State Parks to promote the effort.

The California children's outdoor bill of rights provides that every child should have the opportunity to:



1) DISCOVER CALIFORNIA'S PAST



2) SPLASH IN THE WATER



3) PLAY IN A SAFE PLACE



4) CAMP UNDER THE STARS



5) EXPLORE NATURE



6) LEARN TO SWIM



7) PLAY ON A TEAM



8) FOLLOW A TRAIL



9) CATCH A FISH



10) CELEBRATE THEIR HERITAGE

Children in Nature Campaign Website

By Monique A. Osborne
Graduate Assistant
Children in Nature Campaign

In mid-March the Children in Nature Campaign went live with its new website, which can be found at www.ca.parks.gov/cinc. The website is a great source of information for field practitioners, teachers, parents and the media.

The Calendar of Family Friendly Events lists activities from throughout the State Parks system that offer "kid friendly" activities and events. Many interpreters, rangers and volunteers have been instrumental in helping compile this calendar. The calendar is a full year's worth of activities that work in conjunction with the Children's Outdoor bill of Rights.

The calendar is easy to read, showing the date and name of the event, park where the event is taking place, county of the park, a few words that describe the event and the park's telephone number.

The campaign is always on the lookout for more activities to add to the calendar. If your park is preparing to host an event and you would like it placed on this calendar, please send information to cincinformation@parks.ca.gov. You can also send comments and suggestions as well as information about relevant articles and research sources that

would benefit the Children in Nature Campaign to this address.

Along with the calendar of events, you will also find the **Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights** pages. Each of the ten rights has its own page with a description, picture and an easy-to-access cross-reference list to all of California's parks. All a parent, teacher or practitioner needs to do is check off the amenities or activities wanted or needed for their trip, press "GO" and a list of parks will be generated, making it easy to find a park with just the resources they need for their trip.

The Research and Resources pages list over one hundred annotated links, in five distinct categories: **Children in Nature National and State Movements, Nature Activities, Environmental Education, Research and Funding Opportunities**. The annotated links are not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive list.

"**Research**" is where practitioners, teachers, parents and the media will find California State Parks' issue paper Researching the Child and Nature Connection. This paper was researched and prepared by Nicole Migliarese, a PhD. Candidate from University of California, Berkeley. Much of the philosophy and basis for the Children in Nature Campaign can be found in this paper. There are 21 other sites on this page that link to research papers, supportive information and universities

nationwide that have also taken up the children and nature cause.

Children in Nature National and State Movements has links to agencies who are working on children and nature campaigns locally and nationwide. This site is designed to give the reader a sense of what is going on nationwide and reinforces the importance of bringing children and nature together.

Nature Activities provides links to programs, recommends activities for children to connect with nature, gives tips for developing green schoolyards, lists curriculum resources and identifies resources for funding, training and assistance.

Environmental Education information includes links to professional development activities



San Luis Reservoir SRA
Kids' Fishing Day

Website, Continued

and a national clearinghouse of resources, programs and initiatives, a PBS series that examines how people improve their environment and quality of life in cities, community-action guides, teaching and educational materials, field trip and schoolyard habitat development grants, and more.

Funding Opportunities

provides links to information on environmental education grants and jobs, professional development, mini-grants and resources for educators, annual conference and information on the grant-making process.

The staff is constantly searching for current research and relevant items (mail to cincinformation@parks.ca.gov) to add to the annotated list. We are hoping to be a premier location for field staff, teachers, the media and families to visit when they want to learn more about the Children in Nature Campaign, California State Parks, and the nationwide movement to reduce "Nature-Deficit Disorder."

Intranet

We are also pleased to announce the development of an intranet site for State Parks staff. This site is loaded with resources and tools for you to use in the field and adapt to your specific needs. <http://isearch.parks.ca.gov>

Thank You, Skogsmulle, for Turning Me On to the Wonders of Nature!

By Jonas Ekeröth
Program Analyst
Worker's Comp & Safety Unit

Thank you for enhancing the wonders that nature offers, for taking me out to visit the ants and letting me discover who lives in the old tree stump; for teaching me how to behave and care for myself in nature and making me realize that nature is wonderful no matter what the weather; for teaching me how to find my way by pointing out that anthills are always built on only one side of trees (the south) and that the same is true for lichen growth; for teaching me the names not only of lichens and different ants but of all common plants and animals; for telling me about their natural history in a way that a five-and-a-half-year-old boy can appreciate; for showing me which flowers are protected and which you can pick for your mother; for teaching me what berries, mushrooms, and plants you can eat and which are poisonous; for making me sit quietly with all the other children and watch a squirrel eat pine seeds; for teaching me which birds sing which song, which fly south for the winter and how those that stay survive the bitter cold; why the leaves turn bright orange, red and yellow in the fall and fall off; what you can make of the many things that you can gather in the woods and



what you can and cannot gather; for helping me develop a sense of respect and responsibility for nature; but most of all, for keeping it so simple! Do you know that the experiences that you provided me with as a child have been with me ever since as a source of strength, sense of belonging, and excitement? You planted a seed within me that has grown into a lifelong appreciation for nature wherever I happen to be and whatever its form, be it that patch of native grass by the light trail tracks where I've noticed a red-winged blackbird perched on a reed singing his crackling song, or the vastness of the northern taiga. They're both equally awe-inspiring to me!

In Scandinavia, organized "Children in Nature Programs" have been around for at least fifty

Skogsmulle, Continued

years. In Sweden, chief among these programs is no doubt Skogsmulle Skolan (Skogsmulle's School). Skogsmulle Skolan was developed in 1957 by Swedish naturalist Göesta Frohm, who wanted to kindle an interest and respect for nature among children. In concert with Friluftsrämjandet (The Swedish Free-Air Society), Frohm came up with a simple concept that teaches children about nature on their own terms. Take a group of five- to six-year-olds to the closest spot in nature you can find. Let the children explore through unorganized play, but incorporate interpretive elements that enhance their experiences by tapping into their own imaginations. This is where Skogsmulle himself comes in: Skogsmulle is central to the program and was created to be the children's friend, a fantasy

character in nature. Steeped in the Scandinavian folklore of trolls and other mythical beings that inhabit forests, mountains and the sea, Mulle visits the children to sing, play, and tell them about nature. Skogsmulle is an exciting character that caters to children in the story-telling and make-believe stage of development.

He stirs their imagination! And that is perhaps the key to the success of the program. In hillsides, meadows and small wooded areas near their homes, Skogsmulleskolan satisfies children's curiosity and desire for discovery and adventure. Through play, children discover nature, learn about the most common plants and animals (there are few children in Sweden who can't identify a blue tit bird or a birch tree), learn about the interdependency of all plants and animals, and begin to develop a sense of respect for nature and

all its living things. After all, as most Swedish children will tell you, Skogsmulle is all about respect for nature!

The program has been a great success. According to the Free-Air Society, since its inception, two million children have "graduated" from Skogsmulle Skolan. Like me, these graduates have likely carried or will carry their appreciation and respect for nature with them for the rest of their lives. Thank you again, Skogsmulle; were it not for you, that patch of grass or the northern taiga may have been just weeds and wasteland to me!

To learn more about Skogsmulle and Skogsmulle Skolan, visit his website: <http://skogsmulle.friluftsforslag.se>



The author near Lofoten Island, Norway. Photographer Tore Sandall

Office of Grants and Local Services- Children in Nature Efforts

**By Viktor X. Patiño
and Don C. Shapiro,
Associate Park and Recreation
Specialists**

The Office of Grants and Local Services develops and administers grant programs that protect natural habitats, create new parks, and construct new recreational facilities to improve communities throughout California. Over the last eight years, our office has administered some of the most significant park improvement grant programs in United States history, due to funding from the \$2.1 billion 2000 (Proposition 12) and \$2.6 billion 2002 (Proposition 40) Resources Bond Acts.

Our office is playing a key role towards meeting both the State Parks strategic urban initiative and the Children in Nature Campaign by creating new urban parks in partnership with community-based organizations, cities, counties, and other local park providers. The California Legislature is recognizing the need for new parks and recreation facilities within walking distance of children and families, senior citizens, and other population groups. Due to a variety of financial and social circumstances, high concentrations of residents cannot travel to parks and open spaces located outside their communities. The upward spiral in the cost of



El Dorado Nature Center Project

private and public transportation has further limited access to parks and open spaces. Residents of underserved communities lacking close-to-home park and recreation facilities they can use on a daily basis are often most likely to suffer from health and social problems, such as obesity, crime, unemployment, and the effects of a blighted environment. Without these community parks, many children would not have access to an open space area that provides a safe place to play.

In addition to bond act grant programs, our office also administers annual grant programs, including the Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF). HCF can become a vital funding resource to advance the mission of the State Parks Children in Nature Campaign. The following

HCF grant amounts were recently awarded for the purpose of taking children into nature whom otherwise would not have the opportunity: County of San Diego, \$150,000; City of Santa Ana, \$100,000; City of Glendale \$52,487; and City of Vacaville, \$24,125. The monies are to be used to help develop programs and staff and to purchase equipment.

Two million dollars are available annually to fund programs designed to bring urban residents into natural areas, such as the beauty and splendor of California State Parks. Eligible HCF applicants include cities, counties and local districts, and partnerships with other organizations are encouraged.

For more information about the HCF opportunities, please contact Deb Viney, dvine@parks.ca.gov, 916.651.8872



Connection and Collaboration

By Terry Gerson

**Park and Recreation Specialist
Office of Community Involvement**

Is there a better metaphor for building a community, learning to live, work, and play together while developing leadership skills than camping and enjoying the great outdoors? The Outdoor Youth Connection (OYC) utilizes these kinds of experiences as the building blocks for developing character, leadership, and community involvement in an outdoor setting.

The OYC is a collaborative effort of California State Parks, the Pacific Leadership Institute of San Francisco State University, and the California State Parks Foundation, with funding provided by a grant from the Stewardship Council. The OYC helps young people and their communities realize the benefits of outdoor recreation. It also provides the tools and support to help kids enjoy the outdoors and encourages service projects in their communities. Connection and collaboration are at the heart of the process of reaching out to underserved areas of California and those who may not have the awareness or the ability to get out on their own.

OYC connects kids with nature, interconnects communities, and helps everyone connect with the resources of California State Parks. OYC starts by contacting community-based organizations that help kids and their neighborhoods. Next OYC provides youths ages 14-17 with a four-day training program on leadership and outdoor skills that includes two nights of camping and lots of fun outdoor adventures and activities. The camping equipment, campsites, food and facilitators are provided at no cost. Young people participate in experiential team building and leadership initiatives during a highly interactive, hands-

on workshop. Then OYC provides a network and resources for the young participants to plan and lead their own outdoor activities and service projects for their communities, friends, and families.

Success: The program had its beginnings in the fall of 2006 through the fall of 2007. 72 young people participated in the first workshops. Over 1800 more youths benefited from OYC because they got to participate in outdoor activities and community service projects the seventy-two original participants planned and led. Outdoor activities included camping trips, horseback



Folsom Lake State Recreational Area, Peninsula Campground



Outdoor activities included camping trips, horseback riding, day trips to parks, river rafting, and challenge ropes courses. Photos taken at Mt. Diablo

riding, day trips to parks, river rafting, and challenge ropes courses. Communities benefited from service projects such as neighborhood cleanups, restoration projects, and building community gardens.

Expansion: As a result of the networking momentum generated, the Outdoor Youth Connection program has continued to grow exponentially into its second year, as kids and their community-based organizations establish relationships with people from all over California. Because OYC targets specific areas, the workshops and outings are a

blend of very diverse kids from different places and organizations. Currently OYC works with San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno and Bakersfield. Necessity and demand require expansion from these cities into other areas. Soon the Outdoor Youth Connection will service Southern California communities as well. Expansion allows OYC to connect more kids and more communities so that more and more people can enjoy the benefits of outdoor recreation, community service, and all that the California State Park System has to offer. Ultimately, the

program can expand to other cities and states throughout the country. By encouraging youth and providing a network of support, the Outdoor Youth Connection could become an important mechanism to stem the tide of nature-deficit disorder nationwide. For more information about Outdoor Youth Connection please contact

Dolores Mejia, dmejia@parks.ca.gov, 916.653.5454

Terry Gerson, with OYC Youth Council and Northern California Workshops, tgerson@parks.ca.gov, 916.653.8776

California's Tapestry

A Diversity Feature Article

Summer 2008

Belonging to the Land: Using Education to Honor and Embrace Diversity

**By Nina Roberts. PhD.
San Francisco State University**

One of my favorite sayings is: "The land does not belong to us, but we belong to the land." Over 25 years of working with youth of all backgrounds, I have found truth in these words and applied them as fundamental when educating young people about the world that surrounds them. I have also realized it is not only crucial to implement structured outdoor programs in schools, but also to educate people in the way to provide informal nature education to children through creative, unstructured play. It is important to decipher the children's vision of the world, particularly within the context of diversity, and from this, the outdoor experiences of the child should appeal to all of their senses. My personal and professional interests include bringing this knowledge to urban youth and helping them explore it, first within, and then, beyond their individual physical, emotional and cultural comfort zones.

Exposure to nature plays an increasingly vital role in youth development. Unfortunately, many city parks are not the safe havens they should be, because of persistent use by gang members, the sale and

use of drugs, occasional violence, and even insidious drive-by shootings. A more community-based, nature-conscious lifestyle can potentially help mitigate these issues and engage our current and future attention towards providing safer, more fulfilling activities in the outdoors. And for urban youth, a challenge often disregarded is developing a sense of relevancy to their lives as well as enabling them to move beyond their own physical, emotional and cultural comfort zones.

Diversity cannot be detached from the study of human connection to nature; the two are inseparable. The opportunities are ever-present and growing; fostering the relationship of kids to nature, in the spirit of diversity and cultural cooperation, is an ongoing job that is never done. I especially love working

with urban youth because they learn to develop awareness of the magnificent resources they often have at their fingertips, in their own backyards. Characteristically, they have no idea of what lies beyond the realm of their video games, iPods, or the four walls of their own or their friends' homes. Education can go a long way towards opening these malleable minds and filling them with positive, frequently life-changing experiences. Once they are ready to explore the wildlands beyond their immediate environment, we still need more ethnic minority leaders to guide them into a natural world they had previously never been exposed to—this shows them how they factor in the grand scheme of their surroundings, and why diversity in nature is a gift that should be constantly nurtured. The important lessons learned in nature, and the synonymous bond with culture, is



Photo by
Dudley
Edmondson

part of an enriching experience these kids will maintain their entire lives, no matter what their backgrounds or ultimate recreational interests are.

Part of my connection to local communities is through my work as Project Director of the Pacific Leadership Institute (PLI), a special program of the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism at San Francisco State University. The PLI works with Bay Area youth from wonderfully diverse backgrounds, many of whom are considered "hard-to-reach". The PLI emphasizes learning by doing, and the mission, promoted by leaders from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the diverse nature of the communities they serve, is to expose children and youth to the outdoors, as well as provide new and exciting challenges that will prove inspiring, educational, and beneficial throughout their lives. With the new tools they develop, these young people learn to recognize the benefits of teamwork, foster peer support, and learn to be effective leaders through concrete experience as well as exposure to natural habitats.

Our current partnership with California State Parks and CA State Parks Foundation, "Outdoor Youth Connection (OYC)," is a unique opportunity to teach underserved teenagers about the value of integrating the natural environment into their lives coupled with development of leadership skills that will last them a lifetime. The OYC provides young people who are involved in community-

based organizations experience in various activities from teambuilding to camping. The PLI leads games with recreational and educational goals, problem solving initiatives, and outdoor adventures, all while empowering youth to develop important habits for a healthy lifestyle. The PLI also provides practical training in planning, organizing, and guiding trips and events; we ultimately prepare them to lead their own outdoor trips and projects for their peers and community. Participants not only learn by experience, they have lots of fun – also an essential ingredient for success. Furthermore, the PLI oversees a strategic evaluation process in collaboration with California State University, Sacramento.

When urban youth are exposed to nature, their perspective on culture and the future starts to change in both the technical and humanist view. These are essential steps they will take towards giving back to their communities while helping to build a thriving society based on mutual respect arising from direct contact with the land that nourishes and sustains them. Outdoor education and recreation is a conduit to the transfer of knowledge, awareness, care for our environment, and development of significant individual skills. This knowledge, sense of compassion and often newfound environmental awareness, in turn, translate to the human sphere and the resulting effect has the incredible power to bring young people together in the same way as art,



Photo By Nina Roberts

music and writing—yet perhaps the greatest factor is the consideration that it should be accessible and affordable by all.

Forty years ago this past spring, Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed for challenging the status quo, for speaking out against injustice, and seeking ways to change the "system" (political, economical, educational). We should thank those of our leaders who strive to move beyond the notion that "It can't be done" or "why should I care" because King's legacy knows no cultural boundaries. He and other visionaries provided each of us with the tools to make the world a better place; our challenge includes using some of these tools to ensure urban youth know the outdoors is, indeed, also theirs to explore. In closing, my other favorite quote is from Mahatma Ghandi: "Nature is not for everyone's greed; it is only for each one's need."

Catalyst Summer 2008 Contents

From the Editor	Page 3
Interpreters' Resources	Page 5
Dear Master Interpreter	Page 6
The Children in Nature Movement	Page 7
Book Review	Page 8
Education and Environment Initiative	Page 9
Fam Camp	Page 10
Where History, Nature and Play Meet	Page 11
Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights	Page 13
Can You Guess the COBRs?	Page 15
A Superintendent's Perspective	Page 17
Comic Relief: "WEE PALS"	Page 18
Children in Nature Campaign Website	Page 19
Thank You, Skogsmulle!!	Page 20
What's Cookin'?	Page 22
Outdoor Youth Connection	Page 23
Office of Grants and Local Services	Page 25
California Tapestry	Page 26



Interpretation & Education
Room 1431
P.O. Box 942896
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001
